

he wouldn't have it any other way by [orphan_account](#)

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Summary:

Even though the hours are long, and the cooking and baking are sometimes back-breaking, and they barely make enough money for rent, Mike finds himself not wanting it any other way.

Or, the Bob's burgers au only one (1) person other than me wanted

[ON HIATUS]

1. Chanukah

Author's Note:

hello everyone!! so this is my first fanfic ever, so i apologize if it's bad (also the format might be weird since I'm uploading this from my phone) lol this will be a series of oneshots and is a bob's burgers au for stranger things so quick run down:

instead of a burger restaurant it's a bagel shop/deli (they're all jewish in here bc i say so)

mike = bob

will = linda

max, jane/el, and lucas = the belcher kids(they're all adults tho)

dustin = teddy

also i dedicate this to @eddkaspbrak on tumblr bc they were the one to give me this idea and they encouraged me to write this! feedback is appreciated and there is talk of mental illness, specifically ocd, and allusions to the holocaust, so if those trigger you, please don't read! enjoy!

It's a quiet Wednesday morning when Mike Wheeler saunters down the stairs of his second-story apartment to the ground floor where his restaurant, Wheeler's Deli, stands. Sighing, he unlocks the door and walks inside, looking around for the light switch. After it's been found and turned on, he pulls out his cell phone to check how much time he has until eight am, until opening.

Oh shit, he thinks as the time shows 5:18 am, I better get going with the preparation! Wonder when Lucas is gonna get here.

As Mike walks into the kitchen to prepare the food for the day, the bell above the door chimes, signaling that someone has walked in. Peering out, Mike smiles as he sees that that someone is Will Byers, his boyfriend. Will works alongside Mike, sometimes cooking with him and sometimes manning the cash register. Him and Mike share both the restaurant and the apartment above, even though the restaurant was technically only Mike's, having been passed down

from his dad when Mike was only 20. Even though the hours are long, and the cooking and baking are sometimes back-breaking, and they barely make enough money for rent, Mike finds himself not wanting it any other way.

“Hey babe, took you long enough! Was starting to get a little lonely all by myself down here.” Mike calls out to his boyfriend of nine years.

“Yeah, well I’m here now so...,” Will says with a shrug of his shoulders and a tired smile on his face. Mike can tell that something was wrong with Will, ever since he confessed to Mike late one-night last week that he had felt “off” and especially anxious in anticipation of the anniversary of the traumatic event that had wracked his life when they were only twelve. Mike wants to just pull Will into the back with him, give him a hug that lasted for hours, and try to talk to him about how and what he was feeling. But because he knew that he couldn’t do that here in the restaurant, he settles on telling him something that would cheer him up until he could talk to him later tonight in the privacy of their apartment.

“You know what’s next month, right?” Mike walks up behind Will, who’s unlocking the cash register, and wraps his arms around his stomach.

Will lets out a chuckle and beams as he looks behind him at Mike, “Of course, babe! Like *I’d* forget that Chanukah’s coming up.”

“Thank God, I thought you’d bail out on me Byers! What *would* we do if the customers came in and—oh my, no decorations! It’d be a scandal! We’d have to close, uh, probably go on the run, maybe even change our names! Oh, tarnishing my dear father’s reputation he worked so hard to maintain!” Mike dramatically declares as he lets go of Will and drapes himself across the counter, as if he were the star actor in a Shakespearean play.

“Oh jeez—okay! I was gonna do the decorations after the cash register,” Will exclaims as he breaks into fits of laughter, “but I don’t know if those decorations are gonna get put up if you keep distracting me like this! Leave me alone and go make the damn food so we can *feed* our customers today!”

"Alright, okay. Tell me when Lucas gets here." Mike picks himself up off the counter and heads back to the kitchen, kissing Will on the cheek while doing so. Will gives him a thumbs up to signal that he heard him, and Mike is once again off to the kitchen to start his day.

Mike begins to measure out the ingredients, listening for the bell above the door to let him know that Lucas Sinclair, one of the waiters and his best friend since literal birth, has arrived so the tables can be set up for the day. Until then, Mike busies himself with all the things he has to do in two-and-a-half hours until opening. Mike loves his job, he really does. He knows not many people can say that, so he's grateful that he can. It's worth seeing all the customers light up with joy when they see their food coming to them, reminding them of the food they ate during their childhood, the same food that Mike ate growing up. It especially warms his heart when the grandparents who frequented the place with their grandchildren in tow would come up to him and tell him how much the food reminded them of *their* grandparents.

He'll never forget when a woman around the age of 90, with her thick Polish accent and a faded number tattoo on her forearm, came up to him and told him that it felt like she was back in her childhood in Poland eating his food, before the war, before the *camps* happened, and her family had been torn apart. The woman had been on the verge of tears as she told Mike this, Mike himself understanding her story, as his own grandparents had the same experience and the same faded number tattoo to show for it. Mike had hugged her and shakily said thank you, watching with teary eyes as she left. Later that night, he had bawled his eyes out in Will's arms in their apartment, rocked by the compliment itself and by the pain he felt for this woman, the pain that he had also felt for his grandparents.

The tedious work also kept his shit brain occupied enough that he wasn't panicking and obsessing over something, whether it be his health or that one violent intrusive thought he just had. Ever since he was a teenager, he's been dealing with this goddamn OCD and, unfortunately, it did not get better when he entered adulthood like he had thought. In fact, he thinks its actually gotten worse. Almost 24/7 was he consumed with anxiety over his health, worrying if he was going to have a heart attack from that one black-and-white cookie he

ate or if that headache he had was because he was having a stroke and *you need to take me to the hospital* *Will I'm dying I'm having a stroke I'm sure this time please please* I don't want to die. Daily chants of *I must eat healthy I must eat healthy I can't die if I eat healthy* overtook his brain sometimes to the point that he could barely function, lying in bed and crying over the fact that he thought he was dying, even though he *knew* that he had Cheerios for breakfast and he *knew* that those were healthy so why did he have that mysterious pain in his chest near his heart.

It also didn't help that he had to deal with his intrusive thoughts. Thoughts of murdering his friends and having sex with his younger sister plague him as frequently as the health anxiety does and it fucking terrifies him. He couldn't be able to describe the utter relief he felt when he had stumbled upon OCD when researching something for his high school psych class and found out that these thoughts he was having were not because he was a murdering rapist pedophile, but because he had a mental illness. Though it wasn't the greatest thing in the world, it was better than *that*. It was why he hated when ignorant assholes joked about "being OCD" when they had the urge to clean their room. They had *no* idea what it was like to live with it and he hated them for that.

Of course, right at this moment, when the bagels are almost done baking and the matzah ball soup is simmering on the stove, is when Mike starts to panic about Lucas not being here.

It's almost 7:30 why the hell isn't he here? Is he hurt? Oh god, what if he's dead? He could be dying at this moment I should call him and see if he's okay, Mike frantically thinks as nausea fills him. *He's probably sick with some deadly illness oh no what if he gave it to me? I'm probably dying right now that selfish son of a bit—*

"Mike! Lucas is here!" Will calls out to him as he tapes holographic menorahs to the walls of the shop. Sure enough, when Mike peeks out of the window to the house of the restaurant, he sees his best friend trudge through the door, the bell ringing as he walks in. Quick as they started, the thoughts about his friend die down and Mike is filled with a sense of relief.

"Where were you, asshole? You're late and I nearly worked myself

into a panic attack over what could've happened to you." Mike scolds Lucas while he clocks in and ties an apron around his waist.

Lucas, fully aware of Mike's anxiety, says "Yeah man, sorry about that. I woke up, like, super late and traffic here was freaking bad! So, the food done?"

"Almost. The bagels still have around, like, five minutes left. Is Will almost done with the, uh, decorations?"

"I think so. You should see, restaurant is *absolutely* covered with shit."

Mike really looks at the shop and just like Lucas said, it's covered with the decorations they had stocked up for Chanukah, including blue and silver streamers on the sides of the tables and three banners hanging on the wall that all manage to spell "Chanukah" three different ways. He sighs as his eyes comb over the restaurant and hopes that Lucas, Max, and Jane are still able to walk around and serve the food with all the decorations up, though he doubts that. Him and Lucas share a look and know that after closing time, they'll have to sneak back down and take some of the decorations down to hang in their apartment, so the restaurant isn't too crowded. Mike already knows that Will won't mind it too much, since they're forced to do it every year and he loves seeing the apartment decorated too.

Finished with the food preparation, Mike starts cleaning up the station. As he's wiping down the table, he hears a car pull up out back and recognizes it as Max Hargrove's car, carrying the other two workers, Max and Jane Hopper. They were Mike's best friends since he was 13 and were also dating. Though he always caught them taking "breaks" during the day instead of working, he was happy that they finally found love with each other.

"Hey guys." Mike greets the two girls as they walk in, faces red from the cold and hands intertwined.

"Hey Mike. Sorry we were almost late, traffic was insane!" Janes helps tie Max's apron behind her back the same time Max laments "Traffic fucking sucks!"

“See? Told you! Why aren’t you calling *them* assholes?” Lucas exclaims as he turns to Mike, slightly flailing his arms.

“Because 1. They still managed to be on time, you were almost 20 minutes late, and 2. I know it irritates you.” Mike states with a shit-eating grin. Lucas grabs a towel off the counter and flicks it toward Mike. Mike’s too slow to dodge it and ends up getting hit in the back of the thigh.

“Ugh, Lucas you rude-ass bitch!” Mike whines as he grabs the back of his thigh, wincing in pain.

“You deserve it, *asshole*.” Lucas leaves the kitchen with the same shit-eating grin Mike had been wearing a moment ago and goes to greet the first couple of customers that have trickled through the door. Max and Jane follow him out, Max holding in laughter at what just happened and Jane shooting Mike a sympathetic smile.

With Jane on the cash register, Will walks back into the kitchen, ready to help Mike with the orders pouring in. As he puts his apron on he notices Mike staring at the decorations he took an hour-and-a-half to put up. He was quite proud of it, if he was being honest.

“Like it?” Will bumps his hip against Mike’s with a grin on his face. Mike is delighted to see that Will’s spirits have brightened a bit since this morning, having known that decorating the shop would do that. However, he still felt the need to point out the number of trinkets and ornaments adorning the restaurant’s interior.

“What? How is it ‘too much’? We need to get in the mood!” Will shouts excitedly.

“I know that, love. But we can’t get in the mood if we can’t get the food to the customers. Also, why do the dreidels have smiley faces on them?” Mike walks over to the fridge to get out the eggs while Will heats up the stove and places the pans down.

“Cause they’re happy! It’s their favorite holiday, they love it!”

“Yeah, okay, they do look cute.” Mike resigns himself to Will’s joy and continues getting pancake batter and other ingredients out on the

counter to fill out the orders Max and Lucas are bringing in.

That's how it is for the next couple of hours. Mike and Will make meals and crack small jokes side-by-side, Lucas and Max run around while taking orders, and Jane helps customers pay at the cash register, stopping occasionally to grab a pastry from the display case at the end of the counter. The regulars that are there make small conversation with every one of them, telling Jane about their sister's wedding they went to last weekend and bragging to Will through the opening about how their kid got the highest grade in their class on a particularly difficult math test. It's a little after noon when the workers and customers hear the yell of Dustin Henderson, another one of Mike's best friend, throughout the small restaurant.

"Heeey everyone," Dustin bellows as he bursts through the door and sits down on one of the stools at the counter. He orders his usual of a pastrami sandwich and a side of fries and spins around in the chair, breaking out into an even bigger smile when his eyes land on Lucas, who was taking the order of a mother and child. "Lucas, you're just gonna ignore me like this?"

"Can you hold on, dude? I'm, like, clearly busy with something!" Lucas says back to him with a tinge of annoyance. However, Dustin can still see Lucas trying to hold back a smile at his antics. Lucas finishes writing down the order and goes behind the counter to hand it to Mike to make, then stands there for a couple of seconds, deciding whether he should slide over the countertop and risk getting his ass chewed out by Mike because "that's where people eat Lucas!" He eventually decides not to and just walks around the counter to sit next to Dustin.

Lucas gives Dustin a quick peck on the lips, "Hey, where's Steve?" Steve Harrington is the owner of the small carpentering business that Dustin works at. Dustin admires Steve and sees him as a father figure, having been raised an only child by a single mother his entire life. The decision had been easy when Steve approached Dustin after his high school graduation and asked if Dustin wanted the position, knowing that Dustin wouldn't be able to afford college and wouldn't have an easy time finding a job.

"Still working on that house out in Paterson. Probably won't make it

today,” Dustin then turns to Mike, who’s sitting on a crate in the kitchen, taking a small break, “also Mike, Steve told me to tell you that, um, Nancy’s comin’ by tomorrow to help, or somethin.”

Mike hums in acknowledgement. Having Nancy help with the food would be a huge help and Mike was grateful when his older sister came by to help. She’s the only one besides Will who Mike trusts with the food, due to her being family and all that.

Dustin and Lucas start bickering about some little thing and Mike takes the cue to zone out again. Jane tries playing mediator between the two when she sees newer customers shoot the couple glances, not being familiar with the intricacies of their relationship. Though on the surface, it looks like they can’t stand each other, deep down they really care for each other. When she sees that trying to be the peacekeeper isn’t working and that she should just let them be, she goes back to operating transactions for the customers who are waiting to pay.

Dustin leaves to go back to work around one and the restaurant once again falls into its melancholy routine. Shouts of orders and conversations are heard over the other noises like the ding of the cash register and the chime of the bell above the door, and there’s soon a lull in service around four. Taking advantage of this, Mike takes another short break after working in comfortable silence with Will, while Will leaves the kitchen to relieve Jane from her post at the cash register. While waiting for some toast in the toaster to finish, Mike sits back on his honorary crate of rest, closes his eyes, and leans his head back, reveling in the peace and quiet he can finally enjoy.

It’s then that he hears two people arguing. Thinking it was a pointless little spat between two customers, Mike ignores it and continues on with his pseudo-nap. He springs back up when he recognizes one of the person’s voices and realizes that Will is one half of this shouting match. Quickly standing up and stumbling out of the kitchen to see why Will is arguing with one of the customers, he stands behind the counter and notices that Will is no longer at the register, but standing at the table nearest the door, with Lucas and Max by his side, holding him back from getting too close to the woman’s face. Mike is about to call out to Jane, who is standing in the middle of the restaurant with a look of shock and amusement on her face, to ask her what’s going

on, when he hears a snippet of the confrontation.

“All I’m saying is that maybe you should include something for Christmas, is that too much to ask?” the woman asks, nearly shouts, at Will. She’s white and looks to be about 60, with somewhat of a scowl on her wrinkled face. Mike doesn’t recognize her, so he assumes she’s never been here before.

Will throws up his arms in exasperation, “Yes, *Susan*, it is too much to ask to put up something for Christmas! We’re Jews! We don’t celebrate your stupid holiday!”

Now the woman just looks thoroughly offended at Will’s comment. “First of all, my name is *Carol*. Second, I feel a little left out at not being included in your festivities. I say this might even be discrimination!”

Now it’s Wills turn to look offended. Mike even sees Will clench his fists, seemingly ready to legitimately fight this white middle-aged gentile. “Just go to literally *any* other place in this city—no! This state, and you’ll find your goddamn Christmas decorations! Or better yet! Go to Hobby Lobby! Lord knows that’s your favorite store! They definitely won’t have any of our dirty Jew bullshit being shoved in your face!”

Oh no. Now Will is swearing and he almost *never* swears, especially at customers. Mike knows he has to put a stop to this before it escalates to an all-out brawl, so he calls out:

“Will, I reeeeaaally don’t think it’s, uh, the best idea to start a fight with a customer!” Of course, Mike’s warning falls on deaf ears as Will and this woman keep bickering.

“Never have I been disrespected like this! I need to file a complaint to your manager, young man!” The woman scoots to the edge of her booth and starts to stand, looking for the “manager” of the shop.

“Nice try, *Brenda*! *I’m* the fucking manager and *I* say that what I’m doing is fine! It’s *your* shitty attitude that I have a problem with,” Will then manages to wriggle one of his arms free from Lucas’s grip and points a finger at her, “*Fuck your capitalist holiday--!*” It’s at this

moment that Lucas snaps back into his senses and clamps his hand over Will's mouth, dragging him back into the back to prevent any more drama. Max and Jane quickly, and rather forcefully, escort the woman out while her family profusely apologizes for her behavior.

With the scene over, Mike rushes back into the kitchen to check on Will. When Lucas and Will aren't there, Mike wonders where they've could've gone. Mike then hears loud shouting coming from the door leading to the basement. He descends the stairs to find a furious Will ranting while Lucas attempts to calm him down.

"She 'feels discriminated' my ass! She's really gonna tell a *Jew* that *her* goyish ass feels discriminated! In our Jewish restaurant!" Will yells up towards the restaurant, even though the woman is long gone.

"Man, I know that people like that suck, but you gotta calm the hell down! You're gonna pop a blood vessel!" Lucas exclaims while holding onto Will's arms.

"I don't care! Next time I see her, I'll make sure to discriminate her. With my goddamn fists!" Will is still clenching his fists and screaming up at the restaurant.

Mike intercepts, "Will! *Babe!* She's gone, alright! Jane and Max led her out! It's fine, we're all fine. Right?" Mike directs the last part towards Lucas, who nods in agreement, "so please, calm down, okay? We won't see her again, so it's fine."

Mike's calming tone has an effect on Will, because all of a sudden, with the news that the woman has left, Will loses the adrenaline he had coursing through his veins for the last half hour, waving his arms in the air with resign, "Whatever! I'm fine now, I guess!" He then pushes past the other two men and climbs the stairs up. "You coming?"

Mike and Lucas clamber up the stairs behind Will. When they see that the restaurant has reclaimed its cathartic atmosphere, they all return to their former positions, with everyone in silent agreement that Will should go back to the kitchen for the rest of the day.

When closing time at nine pm comes along, the five adults clean up

the tables and the kitchen, wash the remaining dishes, and put ingredients back where they belong. The cash register is locked, and all the aprons are put back, and soon they're all making their way out of the restaurant, Max and Jane out the back to where Max's car is parked, while the other three leave out the front, Mike locking the door after himself. Lucas walks down the street to the bus stop where he'll be taken back to his apartment, saying goodbye first to Mike and Will. When they lose sight of Lucas, they turn and meander to the door next to the shop that leads to the stairs that go up to their apartment. Just as Mike unlocks the door, he turns to Will with a slight look of concern on his face and gently asks Will if he's okay.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Guess I got so angry because of all the anxiety. God, how embarrassing!" Will hides his head in his hands in embarrassment.

Mike reaches down and pries Will's hands from his face, "Hey, look at me. It's perfectly okay how you reacted, I get that you're on edge because of what's coming up. Let's just...put this behind us. C'mon, we can make some hot chocolate and maybe talk." Mike grabs Will's hand and pulls him into the apartment.

"You do have to admit that it *was* pretty funny, though. I saw Jane's face!" Will says with a proud smile, pulling off his coat when inside.

"Yeah, that shit was actually pretty entertaining. Oh god, did you see her face when you said, 'fuck your capitalist holiday'? That was amazing!" Mike gushes while laughing. Will giggles at the memory of the look of utter anger on the woman's face at his comment and goes to retrieve the packets of hot chocolate from the cabinet, while Mike grabs mugs from another.

Yeah, sometimes shit like this happens.

But Mike finds himself not wanting it any other way.

2. Virginia

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike and Will decide it's time to adopt a dog.

Notes for the Chapter:

Ok so I did not proofread this before posting so the grammar and punctuation might suck lol anyway enjoy!

It's late one Tuesday night when Mike and Will are laying on their ratty couch, watching Star Wars and eating popcorn and candy, when Will drops somewhat of a bomb on Mike.

"I think we should adopt. Like, a dog or something." Will nonchalantly says as he pops an M&M into his mouth.

Mike nearly chokes on the Coke he's drinking, "Oh? What made you think that?"

"I don't know, I just want a pet. I think we're ready." Will says as he sits up and looks at Mike. Mike contemplates his comment. Were they really ready to take care of a living, breathing animal? In this shithole? With the amount of money they made? Mike's not so sure. But thinking about it, he also really wants a dog. They *could* get a small, quiet dog and they *could* set aside some money every month for care and food. With this in mind, Mike makes his decision:

"Yeah, sure. Let's—let's do it."

Will's eyes brighten at this, "Holy crap, seriously?"

"Yeah, why not? Tomorrow we can buy some toys and shit during break, then the day after, we close shop early, go to the shelter and get us a dog!" Mike exclaims.

Will happily laughs. "Okay! Yeah! Yeah, let's get a dog!" Mike, overcome with love for Will, tackles him onto the couch while they both break out into fits of laughter. They were really going to do this.

They were really going to get a dog.

So during their lunch break the next day, Mike and Will take Max's car over to PetSmart and buy some toys for their new dog. They get back just in time, put the plastic bag in the basement, and wait for tomorrow.

Finally, tomorrow comes. Mike announces before opening to his friends that the restaurant will be closing early around two.

"Dude, I'm not gonna complain, but like, why?" Lucas inquires as Mike writes a sign to put on the door about their early closing.

Mike walks to the door with tape in hand while Lucas follows, still with a curious look, "Well, uh, Tuesday night, me and Will kinda decided to...adopt a dog." Mike stares at Lucas to see his reaction at what he just said, expecting at least surprise. Mike even expects Lucas, always the logical one, to tell him that, like he worried, they wouldn't be able to take care of one in their situation. Just as Mike opens his mouth to protest what he thinks will be an argument, Lucas suddenly nods and breaks out into smile.

"That's cool, man. Have fun with that! I mean it!" Lucas claps him on the back and walks back to grab a notepad and, presumably, to tell Max and Jane about the news.

Luckily, the day goes by without drama in response to the early closing, and so when it's five minutes to two, everyone starts cleaning and locking the shop up. Jane and Max excitedly tell Mike and Will to bring the dog to the restaurant so they could meet it. Jane even jokes that they should name the dog after her.

"Yeah, that's exactly what we're gonna do! Doom the dog forever by damning it with your name!" Will jokes back as Jane gives him a light shove. They all leave, and Mike and Will once again take Max's car to the local shelter.

They get there and are instantly greeted by a woman who's wearing a polo with the shelter's logo on it and a name tag that reads 'Ashley'.

Ashley smiles. "Hi, what can I help you with today?"

Mike smiles back. “Hi, we’re looking to adopt a dog.”

“Oh, okay, are you two...?” The woman trails off with a confused look on her face as she points between Mike and Will.

“Yes, we’re dating and yes, we’re adopting a dog together!” Will interjects with a sigh, having dealt with these people too many times before. Mike hides a smile at this woman’s awkwardness. After the moment of embarrassment is over, Ashley leads them to the back, where rows of spaces squared off by wall and chain-link fence stand, holding all different breeds of dogs. The three of them walk through each row, Mike and Will petting and playing with each dog. Finally, they get the last play area in the row. Occupying the space are three corgis, one that’s red and white, one that’s blue merle, and another that’s tri-colored. As they walk in to pet the dogs, Will notices something different about the tri-colored corgi.

Will squats and points to it. “Hey Mike look, this one actually has a tail!”

“Oh, that’s because she’s a different breed! She’s a Cardigan Welsh Corgi while the other two are Pembroke! They’re mostly the same but they do have some differences!” Ashley cuts in. The Cardigan runs over to Will on its stumpy legs and nudges his hand, wanting to be petted.

“What kind of differences?” Mike asks as he also gets on his knees to pet the dog, who’s now taken interest in both the boys.

“Well of course the tails, but a Cardigan is a little less affectionate and temperamental than a Pembroke. The Cardigan also has less health problems. Of course, minor differences.” Ashley states as she leans on the wall inside the area.

Mike then stands up. “Um, are these dogs good in apartments? That’s what we have right now.”

The woman purses her lips and contemplates Mike’s question. “Hm, these dogs *are* high energy, but I think if they get out enough and get enough exercise, they should be fine.”

Mike is really happy that she says that, because he can see that Will is already really in love with this dog and Mike feels himself falling in love with her too. Will looks up at him as the dog runs over to Mike and Mike shares a look with Will that says *can we please talk*, and they leave to stand just outside the space.

“So? What do you think?” Will asks with repressed excitement.

“I think...she’s the one. I mean, I talked to the woman, and she said they could be good apartment dogs as long as they get enough exercise, so...”

“So, it’s official then? We’re getting her?” Will grabs Mike’s elbow as Mike excitedly nods. They smile and grab each other’s hands, squealing with joy. They walk back in and pull Ashley aside to tell her that they’ll take the Cardigan. After, they sign the papers and take her on her leash to Max’s car and set her in the back. They reach the apartment and let Virginia (as they decided to name her, after Virginia Woolf, whom Will adored) roam around, getting used to her surroundings. Mike fills her bowls with food and water, and soon she’s laying all over the couch with them as they finish their Star Wars marathon.

Mike and Will share a look, knowing they made the right decision.

Notes for the Chapter:

I’m aware this chapter is Not As Good as the first one but future chapters will be better I promise! Also I know that they probably didn’t do enough research or ask enough questions abt the adopting so sorry for that!!

I also have another chapter fic in the works so be on the lookout for that in the next few weeks!

Comments and kudos are appreciated and my tumblr is @wlwgods (come yell with me abt how great this au is and send me requests for future chapters!)

3. Tattoos

Summary for the Chapter:

Will drunkenly decides to get a tattoo for Mike.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm back :) can you believe it didn't take me a week to write this?? Anyway I know we're only three chapters in, but I think so far this is my favorite (there's a lot more to the story than the summary says)

There are references to past self harm and OCD (like just in passing) so be cautious!

Enjoy!

Will and his friends are outside, drunkenly dancing around on the sidewalks and the street after having gone bar-hopping in the cold February night. Though they aren't as close to him as the party is, he still appreciates them greatly, which is why he immediately said yes so them asking if he wanted to hang out.

That's how he ended up here, stumbling around and singing Madonna. They're yelling out the chorus to *4 Minutes* when Will spots a familiar building a couple blocks down.

The tattoo parlor.

It's the only one in town, a low brick building with neon glowing signs saying that it's open at this hour. Even though the outside of the building looks like it's been there for a hundred years, Will knows that the inside is kept clean and sterile, and the artists working there are trustworthy and certified. He should know, he's gotten three tattoos from there. Looking at the building, he makes a decision, albeit drunkenly.

He wants a fourth tattoo. Which is why he's dragging his two friends and yelling at the other one to follow him to the parlor. Will is sitting down in the chair after fifteen minutes of waiting, nearly missing and

falling because of how drunk he is. When he's situated, and his friends are waiting outside, the tattoo artist, an African-American woman who Will recognizes as Marina, walks over and sits down, greeting Will and his friends.

"Hey, Will! How's it going?" She says as she smiles and pulls on some disposable gloves.

"I'm amazing! It's-I'm, like, great," Will then leans in close to her, the smell of rum strong on his breath, "I want another tattoo! Can you believe it?" He giggles and falls back into the chair.

"Well, yeah! That's why you're here, at a *tattoo parlor*," She quips while readying the ink, "so what'll it be today, dude?"

Will thinks, having not gotten to that part yet. He sits and thinks for a good thirty seconds before blurting out, "Mike!"

Marina leans forward in curiosity or confusion, Will's too drunk to tell, and asks, "Mike? What about him?"

Will starts waving his arms around as he rambles about his boyfriend, "Oh my god! You know, I ju-just love him so much, you know? He's just so nice, and amazing, and beautiful. Seriously, he, like, deserves the Nobel Peace Prize or something. Oh! I know! I want, on-on my wrist, I want his name, yeah, over the scars! In, like, cursive or some shit. With a little heart next to it! Because I love him so much! On the right one" When he's done with his spiel, he sits back with a look of adoration on his face.

Marina sighs, "I don't know man, you really want that? Like, what if you two ever break up?," Will gives her a horrified look at that question, "I mean, I'm not saying that you're gonna! Just, what if you do? You really want his name tattooed on your body?"

Will contemplates this for a moment and then: "But I love him! I want-I want to give him something! He deserves this!"

Marina can tell that he's not going to budge in his decision, so she opts to give him an ultimatum.

"Okay, fine, but how about something a little more...abstract?

Obscure? So it's not immediately attached to him." Will thinks about her suggestion and slowly nods in agreement, "Okay! So, what do you want *now*?"

As soon as she finishes the question, Will nearly shouts, "A dog! He loves them! We have one and he loves her!"

"Alright, that's good. What, uh, kind?" She inquires as she opens a new pack of equipment for the gun.

Will smiles fondly, "We both love Keith Haring. He's, like so important, you know? To us? I want, uh, one of his dog drawing things," Will then shoots forward and shouts again, "in blue! That's his favorite color!"

After he confirms that it's still on the right wrist, Marina pulls up a picture of his "dog drawing things" on Google and carefully traces it out onto Will's skin with a pen so she'll have something to follow. She loads up the gun with blue and black ink, and starts inking Will's skin with it.

After three hours, Will pays and walks out of the building with a new tattoo wrapped in plastic wrap. As he continues dancing and singing, he thinks about how much Mike is going to love his new tattoo.

It's almost two in the morning when Will stumbles through the door of the apartment, tripping over the stairs. He's halfway up when Mike appears on the landing, having heard Will as he was watching a late night rerun of Bob's Burgers.

Mike stands with his hands on his hips, anxiety written on his face, "Hey, where were you? You never called! I was sitting here worrying that you were dead or something."

Will feels a small pang of guilt, knowing how his OCD can do that to him, but he pushes it down and says with a mischievous smile, "Oh, don't worry! I was out getting you something." He pulls the sleeves of his coat down incase Mike can see the plastic wrap.

Mike raises his eyebrow, returning the mischievous smile, "Oh, really? What did you get?" All of a sudden, Will starts to worry. What

if he doesn't like it? What if he gets freaked out by it and breaks up with him? The thought has Will quickly backtracking.

"You know what? Nevermind! I changed my mind! I'll show it tomorrow! Goodnight!" Will tries to run past Mike to their bedroom when Mike shoots an arm out and catches him, pulling him into a loose hug.

"Wait, no! Now I'm curious!" Mike laughs.

"Get away from me! I said no!" Will scowls and pushes Mike away.

"What the hell? What's wrong?" Mike questions with a confused expression. Will suddenly feels irritated, the drunken euphoria gone.

"You're being fucking annoying, that's what's wrong! Don't touch me, asshole!" Will hisses as Mike face falls into a frown. Will feels guilty again, but he's so angry that it dissipates quickly.

"Are you fucking serious? You're the one who apparently had something to show me!" Mike balls his fists in exasperation.

"Yeah, well, now I don't want to! So fuck off and stop being so goddamn nosy!" Mike looks shocked at Will's outburst, which takes advantage of to stomp past Mike and into their bedroom, locking the door on an impulse. Will starts to undress when he hears Mike walk to the door and let out a big sigh when he realizes he's been locked out of the night. Will hears him open the hallway closet for a blanket and walk back to the couch. Will, for the third time that evening, feels guilty, but ignores it and goes to sleep.

The next morning, Will wakes up hungover with the worst headache ever.

Guess that's what I get for going to bed drunk. Will thinks as he turns over to wake Mike up and take Virginia out. However, Mike isn't there, neither is the dog and Will panics for a few moments before realizing that it's a weekday and that Mike took her and went down to open up the restaurant. He slowly gets dressed, but halfway through, notices the tattoo of the blue Keith Haring dog on his wrist wrapped in plastic wrap and some gauze.

What the hell? Did I get this last night? Will asks himself, and all too soon everything from the night before comes rushing back. The bars, the tattoo, and the fight he had with Mike.

“Oh shit.” Will rubs his face and walks to the bathroom to take off the gauze and the plastic and to brush his teeth. He washes it with soap and warm water and rubs some ointment on it. When he pops a Tylenol pill to rid of the headache, he walks past the living room and sees the blanket and pillow sprawled out on top of it.

Oh god, I need to talk to Mike. Will rushes out and down to the restaurant, preparing the apology in his head. However, he doesn’t get far enough to voice it to Mike when he tries to open the shop door and discovers it locked.

That’s weird. He always leaves it open. Will sees Mike in the back getting food out of the fridge and Virginia sleeping under one of the tables. Will knocks on the door and Mike looks up at the sound. When he sees that it’s Will, he puts his elbows on the counter and leans on them, staring at Will blankly. After a good ten seconds of their staring contest, Mike turns around and goes right back to getting food out of the fridge. It dawns on Will why Mike has locked the door: he’s locking him out like Will did the previous night.

Will sighs. *Fair enough*, he thinks. It’s no use standing outside until Mike decides to unlock the door, so Will walks back up to the apartment. He realizes that he hasn’t had breakfast yet, so he grabs a pan from the cabinet and some eggs from the fridge to make scrambled eggs. As he’s eating, he gets a text on his phone and he quickly grabs at it, hoping it’s Mike telling him that he unlocked the door. Instead, it’s Nancy, asking why Mike is here but he isn’t. Will sends a quick reply, telling her about the fight and to *please talk to him and tell him to come up so I can apologize*. When he’s finished, he puts his plate in the sink and waits. He hears the door open and close and runs out and down the stairs to come face-to-face with a vaguely irritated Mike. When Will gets up close to him, he can see that Mike’s lips are all bloody and scabbed, evidence that he picked at the skin out of worry. Will feels guilty again.

“What?” Mike sighs.

"I'm sorry," Will wrings his hands as he apologizes, "I shouldn't have gotten so angry at you and yelled at you. Or locked you out. I...was nervous and I wrongly took it out on you."

Mike looks confused, "Nervous? About what?"

"About...the thing I wanted to show you." Will's hand travels to his sleeve, ready to pull it up to show Mike the tattoo he got for him.

Mike does a small wave of his arm, "You know what? It doesn't matter, if you don't want to show me, you don't have to."

"No! No, I—I want to show you. I said I would show it today and I'm going to!" Will says with a sudden confidence. He carefully pushes back his sleeve so as not to aggravate the tattoo. When he has the sleeve around his elbow, he turns his wrist towards Mike and shows him the blue dog inked over his now-fading self-harm scars.

Mike looks slightly exasperated. "*That's* what you were nervous about? A new tattoo?"

"Well, yeah, but it was *why* I got them that I was so nervous about. I just, I saw the parlor and thought 'hey, why not?' and when the tattoo person asked what I wanted I just thought of you. Of you and how great and caring you are, and-and how much I love and adore you. But she said no to my original idea which I honestly can't remember. So I got the dog because I know that Keith Haring is really important to us and to you and it's blue because blue is your favorite color, and I just wanted something for you." Will babbles on. He's surprised when he looks up from his wrist, where he had been staring the whole time, to Mike and sees that he's is on the verge of tears with his hands over his open mouth.

"It's okay if you're mad and you don't like it you're not obligated to—" Will is stopped mid-sentence when Mike gently grabs his wrists.

"Hey! I'm not mad!" Mike softly says as tears run down his face.

"You're not?" Will whispers as Mike starts to rub circles over the tattoo with his thumb.

Mike lets out a breathy laugh and wipes at the tears on his cheeks,

"Of course not! I think it's beautiful. I-oh my god!" Mike sniffs and lets out another small laugh, "I love it! I love you!"

Will feels himself choking up at Mike's reaction and throws his arms around Mike's neck and kisses him, "I love you too! So much! I'm so sorry!" Mike mumbles out an "it's okay" as they hug for a few more minutes, until Mike feels a buzzing coming from his phone in his pocket, and he takes it out to read the text message.

At the curious look Will gives him, Mike says, "It's Lucas, wants to know where we are."

Will lets out a small laugh, "We should go help."

"Well, *I* was helping, not so much you." Mike teased as he raised his eyebrow.

"Oh, shut up! That was your fault!" Will cried out as he playfully punched Mike in the shoulder. Mike laughs and wraps his arm around Will, pulling him into his side as Will wraps his arms around Mike's middle. Though it's a little hard to walk out the door in that position, they still manage to do it. They walk into the restaurant like that, finally separating from each other to start their day.

A couple of months go by and before they know it, it's already March. Will and Mike burn with anticipation of their nine-year anniversary on the 21st. They already know where they're going, because they go to same restaurant every year for their anniversary. Mario's Italian Eatery is a small, family-run restaurant settled a few streets over from their restaurant that, as Mike swears up and down, has the best chocolate cake in town, maybe even the whole state. It makes Will smile, thinking in anticipation of Mike's ramblings about the aforementioned chocolate cake as he's walking to the restaurant at that moment. Mike had asked Will to lock up that evening, saying he had something to attend to. However, when Will bothered Mike about what he needed to do, Mike just smiled and said, "you'll see".

So Will knows he's definitely hiding something.

What he's hiding from Will is still a mystery, one that'll have to wait until possibly dinner. Will checks in with the hostess at the front

around six and is promptly seated in a small booth at the back, promising both the hostess and their waiter, Daniel, that Mike will be here soon, he just got caught up with something (which he *still* did not know what it was). Will orders a decaf coffee for him and a water for Mike and waits. And waits. And *waits*. He waits until he finally resigns to the thought that maybe Mike got *too* caught up with what he's doing and that he won't make it at all. A half hour later, he contemplates if he should leave or not when he sees Mike rush in and walk up to the hostess, asking her something, presumably about Will. The hostess nods and says something, then leads Mike back to Will's booth and when she leaves, Mike walks over to Will's side and gives him a quick peck on the lips while mumbling an apology for being so late.

"It's fine. What were you up to though?" Will wondered as he noticed that Mike was still wearing his jacket even though he was inside. Even though it's kind of cold outside, it's warm inside, so Will thinks that it's weird that he hasn't taken it off yet.

Mike clicks his tongue and shrugs, "Nothing...too important."

Will gives him a look that shows that he knows Mike is lying. "Mike, seriously?"

"Okay, fine! I'll show you when we get back!" Mike puts his hands up in mock surrender. The dinner goes as it usually does, with jokes and laughter and a slice of chocolate cake, though Will hasn't forgotten Mike's surprise. They pay for the food and walk back to the apartment, hand-in-hand. No sooner do they walk through the front door is Will pestering Mike about what he's hiding from him.

Will turns around and faces Mike, "Okay, now show me! Please!" Mike sighs with a slight smile on his face and pulls up the sleeve of his left arm to reveal a thick layer of gauze and plastic wrap. Will freezes as he sees this.

Oh my god! Did he? A tattoo? He thinks excitedly as Mike unwraps the plastic wrap and the gauze. He finally takes all the layers off to reveal a tattoo of a Keith Haring dog, but instead of being blue like Will's, his is yellow.

Will feels the burning of tears behind his eyes as he stares at Mike's new, and only, tattoo. "Wha—? You—Mi—I." He's unable to form a coherent sentence, too overwhelmed at the implications of why he got the tattoo.

"I, uh, wanted to match with you. You know, 'cause Keith Haring's so important to you too. To the both of us." Mike sheepishly says.

Will reaches out and gently touches the skin around Mike's tattoo, "But it's, uh, it's yellow."

Mike softly chuckles, "Well yeah, because I know yellow's your favorite color." Will's eyes widen as tears start falling down his face.

Will pulls Mike's hand to his lips and kisses each knuckle, "Thank you. Really," Will wipes his eyes and sniffles, "I love you."

Mike flashes a huge grin as he takes Will's hand in his, "I love you too. And I, uh, got it on the opposite wrist for a reason."

Will tilts his head in curiosity, "Oh yeah? Why?"

Mike pulls his wrist back and shows him the tattoo again, "Well, when we, uh, hold hands from now on, it'll be like the colors from the tattoos mix to be one color. You know, like us...being one...together."

Will starts quietly sobbing, overwhelmed with love for this man, "What the fuck, Mike! Oh god, I love you so much!" Will's wiping at his eyes more vigorously, more tears falling than before.

Will can see the look of surprise on Mike's face, certainly not expecting Will to react like this. However, the look quickly changes into one of adoration as he also starts crying. Soon they're both sobbing, hiccupping, messes.

"I love you too, Will." Mike chokes out as he pulls Will into a tight hug. They both stand there for a few minutes, hugging, reminiscent of when Will showed Mike his tattoo. Will pulls back from where his head is in Mike's neck and softly and lovingly kisses him. He steps back and grabs Mike's wrist once more, extending his own wrist and bringing Mike's up next to his, admiring the tattoos side by side.

This is *definitely* his favorite tattoo.

Notes for the Chapter:

me: throws these 'will self harms' references out of left field

y'all probably: what

me: :)

Ok I will be honest w y'all, I have NO idea when the next time I'll update is, next week is finals for me and then two days after the semester ends I'm going out of the country on vacation. I think the very earliest I can update is the week of January 10 (which I know is a long time I'm sorry!!)

Also this story is not just abt byeler! I can write elmax, henclair, and even stoncy oneshots too! So please give me all your ideas!

4. Hair Dye

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike has a depressive episode/mental breakdown and decides to use hair dye to cope

Notes for the Chapter:

ok so ik I said I wouldn't be updating until January but this hc that eddikaspbrak (on tumblr) and I came up with that Mike copes w a depressive episode by dying his hair was so good that I had to right abt it (also THIS takes the prize for Shortest Time To Write ho boy)

Warnings for depression, anxiety, mention/discussion of eating disorder type behavior and mentions of skin picking

Sorry if there are any grammatical mistakes! Enjoy!

Jane sits in Max's car, waiting for her girlfriend who's inside Dunkin Donuts getting their breakfast. For Max, a chocolate glazed donut and an orange juice and for Jane, a Boston cream donut and a coffee with exactly 4 packets of sugar and 2 creams. It's an order Max knows by heart, and Jane feels a swell of love that her girlfriend committed her coffee order by memory. Max comes back to the car and they're off to the diner for another day of work. They eat and talk about easy topics, what movie they should watch tonight and whose turn it is to order takeout. They're almost there, about five minutes, when the conversation lulls into a comfortable silence. Because of the relevance of the diner, Jane's mind drifts to Mike. She knows her best friend hasn't been doing too well in the mental health department lately, sees it in the dark circles under his eyes and the skin on his hands and lips picked bloody and raw. Lucas has been working alongside Will in the kitchen while Mike has been too depressed to leave the apartment. Of course Will can't tell him this, because Mike would throw an absolute bitchfit if he found out someone besides himself, Will, or Nancy was working the food. But Nancy is too busy with her

main job and Will can't run the back by himself, so Lucas was forced to step in.

Jane wonders whether she'll see him out of bed and in the restaurant, if not cooking then at least just *there*. Jane can't stand the thought of Mike being so depressed and wishes life would just leave him the hell alone. She also wishes his constant stream of anxiety would stop griping him in a chokehold. She can't count how many times Will has told her that his health anxiety has kept him up until the early hours of the morning, finally falling asleep because he got too tired. She remembers in high school when it got to such a point that he completely stopped eating, believing that no food was truly healthy when they were all loaded with chemicals and artificial oils. He got so skinny and frail and sick (in a twist of irony) that his mother finally put him in a hospital, allowing him to get the help that his family and friends couldn't adequately provide. Though he's doing better these days, sometimes the anxiety and depression pushes through and takes hold of him, forcing him to take days off from work to recover (which she knows he hates).

I'm gonna check up on him, see how he's doing. Jane decides as Max pulls up to the back entrance of the deli. Jane tells Max she's going up to the apartment to check up on Mike and that she'll be down soon. She walks around to the front door to the apartment and opens it, walking up the stairs that leads to the main area.

"Mike! Mike, are you there?" Jane strains for something but hears no reply.

That's strange. She thinks as she walks into the kitchen. She spots Mike's phone on the counter and a Post-It note on the dining table, recognizing the scribbling on it as Mike's handwriting. She picks it up and reads the note.

Will

went out to Walgreens for some candy, will be back soon

-Mike

Well okay, guess I'll check on him when he gets back. Jane takes the

note with her down to the deli to show Will. She hands the note off to Will, who nods in acceptance when he reads it, and sits down on the stool in front of the cash register, waiting for customers to pay for their food. Waiting for Mike to come back so she can talk to him.

It's around four when Jane gets a text from the man himself, telling her to come up to the apartment because Will just texted him that she wants to talk to him. He also wants to show her something, which Jane thinks is a little odd. She replies with an "ok, be up there in a sec" and walks to the apartment door and up the stairs.

"Hey, when did you get back?" Jane calls out as she reaches the landing.

"Oh, like, a few hours ago." Mike calls back, seemingly from the bathroom.

"Really, that long? What were you doing?"

"That's what I wanted to show you! Ta-da!" Mike pokes his head out of the bathroom and Jane gasps.

Mike's hair is blue.

The top half of his hair is still the inky black Jane has known since she was 12, but the bottom half, the tips, is messily dyed a bright electric blue. Areas of the dye reach higher than other areas, and Jane thinks she sees a couple of spots the dye missed. Jane also notices that Mike's eyes are puffy and he's sniffling, meaning that he's been crying, probably while doing his hair, which is why it was messy. Well, that, and the fact that Mike has never dyed hair before.

"You like it?" Mike sniffs out while wiping his eyes. He's wearing an apron covered in blue hair dye, but his feet are stained with the color too. Dots of blue line the sleeves of his sweater and scabs and scratches cover his hands.

"Yeah, I love the color! But, why?" Jane moves to run her fingers through his curly hair, still soft as ever, now just blue.

"I just saw it on the shelf in Walgreens and thought 'why the hell not!'", Mike takes a deep breath and smiles at Jane (which she

notices is kind of forced, but she won't say anything), "Jane, I've decided that I'm no longer depressed. I can't be. This hair signals in a new phase, one I'm calling my Mentally Stable Phase! I'm Mentally Stable Mike!" Mike declares with confidence.

Jane doesn't know what to say to that. Luckily, at that moment, she gets a text from Dustin:

Yo, where r u? I was abt to pay for my food but u just left. Also Wills kinda pissed that u just ran out

Jane sighs and types out a reply:

Get up to the apartment, I think something's wrong with Mike.

Jane's goes to put her phone away when she pulls it back out and quickly tells Dustin to also not tell Will because he's definitely gonna freak out about this.

"Who was that?" Mike questions as he wipes more tears away from his eyes and pulls at his hair. He looks like he's about to start crying again and Jane hopes Dustin can get up here quickly.

"Oh, just Dustin. Told him to come up."

"I can show him my hair!" Mike brightens up a bit.

Jane hears Dustin open and close the door "So what's wrong with Mike?" Mike frowns at this.

"Nothing Dustin, just, we're in the bathroom!" Jane calls to Dustin as she hears him mutter something and walk in the direction of the bathroom.

"Seriously, Jane? Then wha—holy shit." Dustin stands in the doorway with a look of surprise on his face as he sees Mike's hair. "Mike, what the hell did you do?"

Mike's face pulls into a smile and he cries out, "I thought it would help! I told Jane, I'm mentally stable now! Mentally Stable Mike!"

Dustin's brows furrow in confusion, "Mike, I'm not a mental health

expert, but this does not look like mentally stable behavior.”

Mike scowls, “Fuck you, Dustin! I don’t need your opinion!” He turns away from the both of them and goes back to admiring his hair in the mirror.

Dustin pulls Jane out of earshot of the bathroom, “Yo, what the hell is up with him?”

“I don’t know! I found him like this! He says he went to Walgreens for candy and, like, ended up buying hair dye on a depressed impulse, I think.” Jane shrugs.

Dustin’s eyes widen, “Do you think he’s been taking his meds during this...episode-breakdown thing?” Jane shrugs again and Dustin turns back towards the bathroom, “Hey buddy, when’s the last time you took your medication?”

“Uh, probably, like, a week ago?” Mike says back, and Dustin shares a worried glance with Jane. They both know that this episode has been going on for a little over two weeks.

“Uh, okay, why...haven’t...you been taking it?” Dustin asks with caution.

“Because why would I need it if it isn’t doing shit! I feel fine without it!” Mike spats from inside the bathroom.

Dustin turns back towards Jane and puts his hand on her back, leading her out of the apartment, “Okay, well, we’re gonna go back to the restaurant, Jane needs to get back to her job and I need to pay for my food, so, see you!” Dustin yells back towards Mike. He turns back towards Jane and mumbles, “yeah, definitely not mentally stable behavior. We need to tell Will.”

Dustin and Jane burst through the door of the restaurant, “Where’s Will?” Dustin shouts. Customers turn and glare at him while Max rushes towards them.

“Where the fuck have you two been? I’ve been waitressing *and* manning the cash register! I’m gonna lose my shit!” She whispers harshly. Jane tries to dodge her girlfriend’s question while Dustin

frantically looks around for Will.

“Yeah that, like, sucks. Where’s Will?” Dustin asks, still frantically searching for him.

Max points to the kitchen, “He’s in the back, why?”

Jane and Dustin run in the direction of the kitchen while Jane yells, “Need to tell him something!”

Max quickly follows them, “Need to tell him *what?*”

Jane turns back to her and cups her face, “You’ll hear when Dustin tells him since you’re following us.” Jane pecks her lips while Max still looks confused. She follows them anyway to the back.

Dustin shoves open the swinging door, “Will, your boyfriend’s off the deep end!”

“What?” Will looks up from the stove while Lucas stops kneading dough shoots them a look of disbelief.

“It’s true! We need to get up to the apartment!” Jane exclaims.

Will puts his hands up, “Woah, woah, wait! What happened with Mike?”

Jane sighs, “Let me just say, he’s off his meds!”

Will still looks confused so Jane groans and pulls his arm to lead him out and up to the apartment with Dustin, Max, and Lucas following.

They get to the landing of the stairs when Will calls out, “Mike, what happened? Jane and Dustin said there’s something wrong.”

“Nothing’s wrong! They’re just lying!” Mike walks out of the bathroom and Will’s mouth falls open in shock.

“Mike! Your—your hair!” Will lightly laughs as he walks over to Mike and cards his fingers through his curls. Will looks at Mike’s face, red and puffy from crying the entire morning, “what’s wrong, love?”

Mike's grin falters a little as tears well up in his eyes, "Nothing. Don't you like it?"

Will gently touches Mike's cheek and wipes away some tears that have started to fall, "Of course I do! It's just, there's something wrong." This time, Mike shrugs as more tears fall down his face.

Jane, Lucas, Max, and Dustin watch in awe as Will pulls Mike into the bathroom and shuts the door.

Oh god, I hope he'll be okay. Jane silently pleads as she hears Mike sob. Lucas and Max turn towards their respective partners, looking completely caught off guard by what just happened.

Before either of them can open their mouths to ask what's going on, Jane quickly explains, "I came up here to see if Mike was okay, but he was at Walgreens. So, when he got back, I went to go check on him and his hair was blue! He says he just saw the dye and bought it! He also hasn't been taking his meds." Jane finishes in one breath. Lucas and Max nod in understanding and turn back towards the bathroom. They can hear snippets of Mike and Will's conversation through the door.

"Why? Why haven't you been taking them?" Jane hears Will gently ask Mike as Mike cries.

"Why should I? They don't do anything! I take them and I still feel like shit! I don't get it Will! I take the medication and I do the therapy and I still feel like this!" Mike cries out in between sobs.

"Hey, hey. I know it sucks. But the meds and the therapy aren't gonna do anything by themselves! You have to continuously work at it, Mike." Will softly says as Mike sniffs.

"But I'm tired of working at it. I just want to feel fine without having to take or do anything."

"I know, I know." Will reassures Mike as Mike starts to sob again, this time even harder. Jane senses tears welling up and feels Max wrap her arms around her.

Max puts her chin on Jane's shoulder, "C'mon, let's go sit on the

couch with the two dorkuses.” Jane chuckles and let’s Max lead her to the couch. After sitting for around five minutes, they hear the bathroom door open and Mike sniffing. Will leads him to their bedroom, while whispering sweet words to him. He walks over to where the rest of the group is sitting and stands in front of them, also having tears in his eyes.

“I think he’ll be fine. We’re gonna talk to his psychiatrist about new medication. God, how did I miss this?” Will rubs his face and let’s his hands fall to his sides.

“That’s good...I like his new hair.” Jane says, hopefully lightening the mood a little bit.

“Yeah, I like it too.” Will smiles and chuckles. Jane breathes sigh of relief. On her left, she can feel Lucas shift around.

“It’s a little weird, to be honest. I mean, it’s cool! But...weird.” Lucas keeps fidgeting with a loose string on his shirt sleeve. Dustin and Max make a little sound of agreement. Will nods absent-mindedly and they all sit in silence. Jane suddenly gets an idea and stands up, turning towards Will.

“I have an idea! I kinda heard your, uh, conversation and I thought in, like, solidarity, we could also dye our hair!”, Jane grabs his hands, “just the two of us!” Jane turns back towards the group and glares at them.

Will shrugs, “I don’t know, maybe.”

Max cuts in, “If you want, Janie, I could dye my-”

Jane whips around towards her, “No! No, your hair’s too pretty.” Jane reaches out to twirl a piece in her fingers as Max blushes and Will sarcastically mutters a “thanks”.

“Just, drive us to Walgreens.” Jane semi-begs with a smile on her face. Max sighs and agrees.

“Wait! Who’s gonna watch Mike? I really don’t wanna leave him here by himself!” Will asks. Dustin and Lucas offer to watch over Mike, so after Will closes and locks up the shop, the three are on their way to

the store.

“C’mon Will! Won’t that be cool?” Jane exclaims as she holds up a bottle of neon green hair dye towards Will.

Will makes a disgusted face and takes the bottle from her hands, setting it back down on the shelf, “Jane, I am not dying my hair the same color as the slime from Nickelodeon!”

“Oh, c’mon! Be adventurous!” Jane exclaims as she holds up the bright red hair dye she’s going to use in one hand, and a bottle of bleach in the other. Max rolls her eyes at the argument.

“Oh, hey! How about this one? It’s green!” Will shows a bottle of emerald green to Jane, hoping and praying that she approves.

Jane narrows her eyes, “Fine. That’ll do.” She stalks off to the register, Max trudging after her. They pay for the bleach and the dye and they drive to Max’s apartment, who promised Jane that she would help them.

They’re driving back to Will and Mike’s apartment a couple hours later, their hair completely different colors from when they first left. After initial surprise from Lucas and Dustin, especially from Jane’s hair, they leave. Soon Max and Jane leave, Jane squeezing Will’s shoulder, and Will is alone in the living room. He gets ready for bed, hoping Mike doesn’t wake up during the night and see what he’s done.

Jane is bouncing on her feet while she stands at the cash register, waiting for Mike to walk in. Will told her when she got in that morning that he heard Mike get out of bed as he was leaving, so Jane *knows* Mike is coming down today.

Sure enough, Mike walks through the door with a soft smile on his face. His smile grows wider when he sees Jane’s hair.

“Woah, what did you do?” Mike laughs as he runs over to the register to get a better look at Jane’s candy red hair.

“I dyed it! For support! I know it’s been hard lately,” Jane grabs Mike’s hands in her own, “also, you might wanna check out your boyfriend.”

At the mention of him, Will walks out of the kitchen, putting on a huge smile when he sees Mike in the restaurant for the first time in weeks. Mike lets out a laugh as he rushes over to Will and runs his fingers through Will’s green hair, “You too?”

Will giggles, “Well yeah! Like Jane said, support!”

Mike envelops Will in a hug and after a second opens one of his arms so Jane can be included. She walks over and joins them, wrapping her arms around her two of her best friends.

Mike pulls back to wipe his eyes, full of happy tears, “Thank you, it means a lot!”

Jane also has tears in her eyes when she pulls back, “Of course! We all support you!” Lucas and Max are there now, and the five friends, with Dustin in spirit, join in on another hug.

They hear Mike start to laugh and everyone pulls back when they see him laugh even harder.

“Mike, what’s so funny?” Will questions with teary eyes even though he’s also quietly laughing.

“I just realized, we’re all like the Powerpuff Girls now!” Mike points out as he continues laughing. Will and Jane look at each other’s hair, realization also hitting them as they double over in laughter along with Lucas and Max.

Jane is glad to support her friends, even in the from of hair dye.

Notes for the Chapter:

I feel like I write too much abt Mike?? It's just he's my Primary Target Of Projection so I tend to

gravitate towards writing abt him sorry!! Also this really is the last time I'm posting before the end of winter break so happy holidays!!

I just realized while posting this that I forgot to write abt Virgina so just assume she's staying w stoncy for the weekend or something

Also if anyone here wants to draw them with their hair colors you are (MORE THAN) welcome to (please for the love of God someone draw this I'm begging I have pics for reference if you do wanna draw it just message me on tumblr for them)

Last thing I promise but this story isn't just abt byeler!! I wanna write for elmax, henclair, and stoncy too!! So send me ideas for them!!

5. Hard Times

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike's going through a hard time

Notes for the Chapter:

OHHHH MYYYY GOOODD. I am SO sorry that I'm posting almost two months after I said I would lmao. The beginning of the semester was hectic and then I got sick with the flu and I recently went thru a bad depressive episode. Also I kinda lost motivation in this BUT rereading your comments helped me!! But yeah, y'all know when I go thru something I gotta project it onto Mike Wheeler lmao.

In this he's just going thru an episode like I did, also this isn't focused on any couples, it's just Nancy and Mike's relationship (there are mentions of stoncy and byeler but that's it)

Also this is random but I don't think I've ever said this but this is like a not supernatural au (no upside down, jane doesn't have powers etc) so yeah

Uh warning for depression and like one mention of self harm (I don't think it's bad tho)

Enjoy!

It was one of *those* days.

It was one of *those* days where Mike couldn't stop crying, one where his energy level was at the floor, one where he hadn't showered in god knows how long-

Okay, maybe it was more like one of those *weeks*.

Mike hated it. The emptiness. The constant urge to cry. The apathy towards everything. The anger. Even though he still forced himself to get up and go to work, he spent the majority of it running to the

basement, trying to hold in his tears until he was far away enough from the staircase so no one would hear. And when he was cooking and suddenly felt the overwhelming urge to cry, unable to get away to the room down below, he would wipe at his eyes with his shirt, hopeful that whoever was working the back with him didn't notice.

Today, it was Jonathan working with him, because Will was at a doctor's appointment and because for some reason Nancy decided to let him in on all the family recipes. Mike didn't hate Jonathan, he was a cool dude who was easy to talk to (if you knew him), even though he kind of had the attitude of one of those 14-year-olds who think they're better than everyone because they listen to The Clash or whatever instead of One Direction.

It was the middle of the afternoon and the lunch rush was starting to subside, the majority of the customers left being older people. With Jonathan having volunteered to take the next order, Mike sat on the stool next to the fridge. He felt so sad but so goddamn empty at the same time.

God, I really hope I don't feel like this forever. Holy shit, what if I do? What if I never get better? Mike worried. The last question caused a pang in his stomach and his eyes to well up, signaling another fit. Mike bolted off of the stool and quickly headed for the basement door that was adjacent to the kitchen's swinging door.

"Hey, Mike! Mike!" Jonathan called after him as Mike slammed the door shut and ran down the stairs, holding his arm in front of his mouth to muffle any noise. He found a chair in the far end of the room, clumsily sitting down in it, and finally let himself cry for what was the third time that day. He buried his face in his hands, the sounds of his sobs echoing throughout the room.

I'm such a fucking failure! Mike angrily thought as he punched himself in the thigh. Angry that he did this *again*, angry that he can't even shower or sleep, just cry and eat and waste everyone's time. He covered his face with his hands and continued to bawl his eyes out.

It was then that Nancy, Mike's older sister, walked in through the door of the diner, coming from her job to see how one of her boyfriends was doing. Jonathan was cutting slices of tomato for a

BLT sandwich when Nancy entered through the swinging door, kissing Jonathan on the cheek while he sweetly mumbles a hello and looking around for Mike.

“He’s in the basement.” Jonathan answered her unspoken question. Nancy furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

“Why? What’s he doing in there?” She inquired as she put her purse down on the now vacant stool.

Jonathan shrugged, “I don’t know, that’s, like, the third time he’s gone down there today. Maybe you should go see what’s wrong.”

Nancy put her hands on his shoulders, “Yeah, I’ll go see. I’ll be right back.” She walked to the door, opening it and walking down the stairs. As she got closer to the bottom, she swore she could hear crying. She instantly became worried, wondering if Mike was the source. Sure enough, her suspicions were confirmed when she got to the bottom of the steps and spotted her younger brother quietly wailing and gasping for air.

“Mike?” Nancy frantically said as she rushed towards him. As soon as he heard her, she could see him hit his forehead with the palm of his head, obviously irritated that someone had found him.

Fuck, I’m such a fucking idiot. Mike berated himself as he hit his palm against his forehead in frustration, upset that he had been stupid enough not to lock the door. He wiped at his eyes as his sister sat next to him on a chair she grabbed, gently wrapping her arms around him in a light hug, asking him what was wrong.

“Nothing’s wr-rong, leave m-m-me alone Nance!” Mike pleaded weakly with her.

Nancy scoffed, “Are you serious? You look like you’re ready to pass out. Seriously, what’s wrong?” Mike looked up at her to see her eyebrows raised in question. He sighed and put his hand on his forehead again.

“I ju-just feel s-so sad and like, terrible and I don’t know w-why and like.” Mike’s rambling was cut off by him starting to cry again, large

sobs that he tried to contain wracking through his body. Nancy's own eyes started watering, feeling overwhelming anguish at the sight of her baby brother. She took a deep breath and wiped her eyes on her sleeve. She stood up and gingerly guided him up from his chair as he softly sniffled. She led him through the back door of the building, knowing that he didn't want to be seen by anyone else. Mike secretly thanked her for that.

They rounded the building and opened the door to his apartment, walking slowly up the stairs with Nancy softly rubbing up and down Mike's upper arm while Mike still let out a gasping breath every couple of seconds. Soon, they were laying side-by-side on Mike's bed, his head resting on her shoulder as she scrolled through Netflix trying to find a movie to watch. It was times like this where Nancy was reminded that even though he was over half a foot taller than her, he was still her baby brother.

"So, now that you're mostly calmed down, can you talk to me?" Nancy inquired as she still scrolled.

Mike sighed, "It's just-I've felt like this for, like, weeks and I don't know what triggered it. I just feel so...*bad*. Last night was the first time in like a week that I showered because I had no energy. And Will had to do it for me," Mike paused to take a drink of water from the glass Nancy had gotten for him, "I get these like, bursts of sadness, sometimes for no reason, and I start crying. I hate it. I hate it so much."

Nancy nods in understanding, wishing she could somehow absorb some of his pain. It sucked seeing him like this, seeing how deeply it affected him when he could barely function in work and his social life. But sometimes she barely noticed it, hyper focused on her own job and life and going by the belief that he had it "under control."

I need to be there more for him. She thought as they finally settled on watching 13 Going On 30, one of their favorite movies. As the movie started she made a promise to herself and to Mike that she would be by his side, supporting him like siblings should do. She, along with his friends, would help him through these episodes and of course, Mike would do the same for her. She felt exhaustion hit her and leaned her head on Mike's head, who was drifting off as well.

It was an hour later when Will walked through the apartment, calling out Mike's name. He opened the door to their bedroom, breaking out into a smile when he saw the two siblings sleeping soundly, the credits of the movie playing on the laptop that had fallen off Nancy's legs onto the bed. He closed the door softly, going to the kitchen to prepare dinner for three.

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry if this is rly sad or just not good this is just how I felt/been the past like week or so but lighter chapters in the future!!

comments and kudos are much appreciated!

I did change my tumblr url to wlwgods so find me there and tell with me about how great this au is (or send requests for future chapters!)

6. not a chapter :(

hi everyone!! im so sorry i haven't updated in almost two months, i have no other reason other than im a trash can w depression lol (also school. school has been pretty rough too).

anyway, im writing this to let y'all know that this is going on a short hiatus :/ just for the summer! it's bc im going home for the break and i won't be writing bc i do not need my parents knowing i write fanfic lol. i will update when school starts up again in the fall!

remember you can **ALWAYS** find me on tumblr at wlwgods! you can give me prompts for this story or for other stories you want me to do! or if you just wanna talk and tell me abt your day!

once again im sorry and thank you in advance for your patience and understanding <3

also this will be deleted when i update so there will be an actual sixth chapter lol

-emmy-

7. still not a chapter :(

hi guys, it's emmy again!! i bet y'all are wondering WHERE i have been since the school year has started and I still haven't updated. unfortunately the truth is that, even though i love this au, i've just lost the energy to write for this story and in general. im also not happy with the lack of attention and kudos this story has gotten, so i might upload another chapter and then end this story OR i might delete it and rewrite it, bc i know that my writing isn't the best and i would love to improve it, whatever you guys would like. but!! that doesn't mean i've abandoned writing completely! if you still wanna send me prompts (that i will eventually get to) to my tumblr @wlwgods then i encourage you to! once again guys im sorry for my absence :(

Author's Note:

hope you liked it! please leave comments and like I said, feedback is appreciated!

come yell with me abt how great this au is on my tumblr @wlwgods (also send requests for future chapters!)